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A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS.

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1872.

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ARLEY HALL, CHESHIRE,

WHOSE GENIUS, SPIRIT AND TASTE

HAVE JUSTLY RENDERED

HIM ONE OF THE

REPRESENTATIVE SQUIRES OF ENGLAND,

AND

WHOSE EFFORTS TO DEVELOPE AND EXALT

THE DIALECTIC AND TRADITIONAL

LITERATURE OF CHESHIRE

HAVE SO CORDIALLY ENDEARED HIM

TO THE WHOLE COUNTY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE EARL OF DEERSLEY.
THE HONBLE. CHARLES ASHLEY, his Son.
THOMAS WARDOUR, his Nephew.
ROBERT STAPLETON, a wealthy Cotton Spinner.
DOCTOR HOYLE.

MRS. STAPLETON.
LUCY STAPLETON.
JESSIE STAPLETON.

THE

TWO LORDS.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *The sea shore, with detached rocks, &c.*

MR. *and* MRS. STAPLETON, LUCY *and* JESSIE, *seated on the rocks;* MR. S. *reading the newspaper, the ladies working or reading.*

Lucy. I always loved the sea. Upon its shores, throughout the livelong day, I could sit companioned with Fancy, listening to the stories which it brings across its restless waves.

Jessie. You are romantic, dear.

Lucy. At times it tells of warlike ships and warriors brave that sentinel the deep with proud security, — of battles fought and the high fame that England's sons have won; and then it tells of more peaceful days, when England's commerce breasted every shore, bearing her proud supremacy in greater triumphs still.

Jessie. Really, my dear, you ought to have been a poet, your fancies are so very delightful.

Lucy. It is more than fancy that makes me love the sea; for when I think that England is its mistress, I am most proud to know that England is my country, and all her glories mine.

Jessie. Oh! you vain thing. Mama, listen to Lucy.

Mrs. S. I have overheard all, my dear; and I think, with Lucy, it is a glorious heritage.

Jessie. Oh yes! I know it is very jolly to be an English girl; but to take all the glory to herself.

Mrs. S. Why not, my love? If it is yours and mine, why not also hers? The love of country is a common inheritance, and a noble one.

Lucy. Dear mama, how much I owe to you. I know from whence these feelings spring.

Jessie. Well, that is good! Capital! I suppose I have no feelings. You are mama's first-born, and being the oldest, have inherited them all,—I mean the feelings. Oh! you spiteful thing. I have a good mind to be vexed.

Mrs. S. My love!

Jessie. But I wont, dear mama [*kissing her*]. You do not think I would be jealous of dear Lucy being like you? Why, I should love her all the more, if it were possible.

Mr. S. Hallo! What's this?

Mrs. S. What is it, dear?

Jessie. The mill on fire?

Mrs. S. Goodness, no!

Jessie. Then it must be cotton's up!

Mr. S. It's noather th' mill nor th' stapple this toim. So Jess is out on't.

Mrs. S. Then what is it, dear?

Mr. S. Whoy it's just a sale by auction.

Mrs. S. A sale by auction!

Mr. S. It's nowt else. Yo'll remember last summer, when we wur touring i' Shropshire, a foine owd place as we seed co'd Normanville.

Mrs. S. Normanville!

Mr. S. Aw sed it. Normanville. It wur that place, woif, yo took us to see that yo'd such a hankering after. Yo sed yo know'd it i' yore younger days. Aw remember it weel, an' a bonny place it wur, for sure; an' aw made up my moind if ever it wur for sale — aw'd buy it.

Mrs. S. And is it for sale now?

Mr. S. Of coorse it is. Didn't aw say so. What is there wonderful i' that? If th' aristocracy o'th' country will spend twenty thousand a yer when they'n only th' hawf on't, or may be not that, it meeans, as sure as my name's Bob Stapleton, that only let things a be, an' there 'll be a sale.

Lucy. I remember it, papa. It was that place that I wanted to sketch, with an old castle and a drawbridge. The ancient seat of Ranulf de Normanville.

Jessie. With a modern hall in "the-house-that-Jack-built" style. Oh yes! I remember it, and the large lake with the swans upon it; and the beautiful boat in which I wanted to row, only — not being on visiting terms with the owner — it was paws off.

Mr. S. That's it. Well, it's gooin to be sowd, an' if aw buy it Lucy con sketch it as oft as hoo loikes, an' Jessie con row on th' lake until hoo's toired.

Mrs. S. Dear Robert! Are you serious?

Mr. S. Well, pinch me an' thae 'll see. But what's cum o'er th' owd woman? Hoo wur as quiet as a mill in a turn-out a bit sin', an' now hoo's workin' o'er toim.

Mrs. S. I remember it ever since I was a child. It was

one of my earliest attachments. I loved it as a home — and when the family left it —

Mr. S. What family? Is th' woman dreeamin?

Mrs. S. I mean the family it belonged to.

Mr. S. Mortgaged, aw reckon, just to toid off th' evil day, an' now it's cum, as it ollus will, an' it's for sale. Here's th' advertisement i'th' Chester papper. [*Reads.*] "To be sold by auction, by Mr. Dunn, on Tuesday, the 16th day of August next, at 2 o'clock p.m., at the Raven Hotel, Shrewsbury, that fine old residential estate of Normanville, in the county of Salop. The estate, which is one of the most desirable properties in the county, extends to 2,867 acres of arable land, and is divided into compact farms, with excellent buildings thereon. The new hall, built in the Tudor style, stands in a park of upwards of 300 acres and is fitted with every modern convenience, whilst on an elevated part of the estate are the remains of the ancient castle, built by Ranulf de Normanville in the 12th century."

Mrs. S. That will do, Robert. Never mind reading more.

Mr. S. Whoy, it's not th' hawf on't yet! It taes a column, an' yo mun hear it o'.

Mrs. S. We will read it, my dear. That will be better.

Mr. S. Well, that's true,—yo con read it. An' aw'll tell yo what,—aw'se goo to Shrewsbury by th' next train an' tae another peep at 't, an' mak' o' soorts o' enquoiries about it; an' if aw loike it as weel as aw did last yer, aw'll goo to th' sale if aw miss th' Manchester market by gooin.

Mrs. S. And you will buy it, dear,—will not you?

Lucy. Oh yes, papa! Do buy it. It will be so much better than living near the mill.

Jessie. I should think it would. And as we are all agreed, there is nothing more for the governor to do than to buy it. Wont he now? [*coaxing him*] just to please Mama — and Lucy — and me.

Mr. S. An' mysel', too, lass, for aw con affoord it. Aw've brass enoof to buy up two or three o' thoose lords' neests like them. An' when aw get theer, aw'll howd up my yed as hoigh as onny on 'em, an' if money 'll buy it, aw'll be a aristocrat too.

Jessie. Bravo, governor! So you shall. And your title shall be Lord Twistandweft, or Baron Dhollerah, or Viscount Orleans. Oh! wont it be jolly? Why, I should not be surprised if you have the servants' large bell rung every morning, as they have at the factory.

Mr. S. That aw will, wench, if it's noblut to remoind me o'th' spoon that's fed me; for lord or no lord aw'se never be ashamed of my beginnins.

Lucy. Mama, dear. Is not Normanville near to Lord Deersley's seat?

Mrs. S. It is the adjoining property. Indeed the two families are branches of the same tree.

Mr. S. Lord Deersley! Whoy, that's him at's stoppin' at th' Queen's wi' his son an' nephy, an' that clever doctor as wants to do everythin'. He carries his yed sum hoigh does that chap, as if he wur th' only collyflower i'th' garden. But aw con tell him theer's cabbages of another mak' quoite as big as him, and aw'll let him see that aw con lord it as weel as him onny day.

Mrs. S. I am sure, Robert, Lord Deersley is a well-behaved gentleman.

Jessie. And so is Mr. Wardour. The governor cannot say a word against him.

Lucy. Nor against Mr. Ashley.

Mr. S. Howd hard. Th' owd gentleman may be as yo say, a weel-behaved gentleman. Aw've nought agen him. But thoose young suckin' lords are nowts, or they wud no' laugh as they dun at everythin' aw say.

Jessie. No: do they really laugh at you, papa! What a shame! Well; so do I. So does Lucy. So does every body. Who can help laughing when you come out with the broad Lancashire expressions which you do—calling people names that only Lancashire people understand.

Mr. S. Well. Aw'se stick to my Lancashire for o' that; an' if aw get this Shropshire place aw'll let 'em see what a Lancashire lad con do. But cum alung, woif, an' get me two-thre things ready for my journey. Theer's no toim to lose. Th' train goos in an hour, an' sixteenth o' August's next Tuesday, so aw mun be shappin. Cum on. We con leeav th' wenches to theirsels. They'll tae no harm 'til thae cums back. Good bye, Lucy; good bye, Jessie [*kissing them*].

Lucy. Good bye, papa.

Jessie. Good bye, papa; and don't forget.

Mr. S. O' reet. Good bye. [*Exeunt* MR. *and* MRS. STAPLETON.

Jessie. I say, Lucy, the governor's a brick.

Lucy. I hope he will buy it. Old places like Normanville cannot be made, and are seldom for sale. But, oh! how sorry I am for the family who are obliged to sell. Who knows the heartaches of such a history!

Jessie. It is very sad, dear. But then we shall not buy the heartaches with the estate. They are not, like the timber, to be taken at a valuation. And as we know nothing of the matter, we had better suppose the family have all died out.

Lucy. Mama knows more about it, I am persuaded, than she will tell. Perhaps she belonged to the family. I often think her of gentle blood, she is such a lady.

Jessie. Speculating again. What fancies you have, dear. Do you think if mama were of noble birth she would marry a man like papa?

Lucy. Why not? Papa has a good heart if he is rough in manner, and when kind hearts meet —

Jessie. They marry out of sympathy. How very sentimental. Heigho! How I do yearn for sympathy.

Lucy. Your wish, dear, may be quickly gratified if I mistake not, for Mr. Ashley and Mr. Wardour are approaching. Had we not better retire?

Jessie. What? And lose the opportunity we sigh for.

Lucy. Oh yes, dear. Do not let them suppose we are loitering here for them. Do come.

Jessie. Ah, you would make a bad general. However, I consent, for strategical reasons, to retire a little. Because retreating before such an enemy is just the way to make them come on. [*Exeunt.*

Enter ASHLEY *and* WARDOUR.

Wardour. By Jove! there they go.

Ashley. Did I not tell you when we met the old people coming back alone that we should find the young ones this way?

Wardour. Good. We have run from scent to view, and now it is Tally-ho! ho! ho! and no mistake.

Ashley. Hold hard, Tom. Keep a tight hand. Be prudent. You know you have been rather attentive of late. Perhaps a little too much so for one that is already engaged to another.

Wardour. Why are you perpetually reminding me of that?

Ashley. Because, Tom, you are such a flirt. You are one of those inflammable beings that a simple ribbon sets ablaze. You never see a petticoat without making sail after it.

Wardour. It is because I love them. At beauty's feet all men sit and worship. Some in form or outline; some in bright imaginings or music; whilst some in color, or even in fragrance, most acknowledge it. But I — in woman see such perfectness as doth unite these excellencies and shapes them to divinity.

Ashley. What of poor constancy?

Wardour. It will take care of itself. As to this engagement—there is no fear of my forgetting it with such kind friends surrounding me. Yet believe me: were I your cousin Sophy's husband instead of being but affianced to her, my eyes would still do reverence to beauty.

Ashley. For the sake of the family interests I would not have you forget yourself.

Wardour. My necessities are as jealous of them as even my best friends would wish. But we are forgetting.

Ashley. There is plenty of time. Fear not.

Wardour. Time is an arrant knave, and with this idle gossip steals away, then bids defiance as we try to catch him. See where they go. We shall lose them yet.

Ashley. One moment more. I heard this morning from my cousin.

Wardour. Good news will keep 'til evening—then take a hundred moments. But if 'tis bad, why here is good shall be its antidote, and we will talk of it to-morrow. Nay, man; I know how precious moments are, and to neglect a present duty is to mock at fortune. So if you will not with me I must go alone.

Ashley. Tom—Tom—do not be impetuous. Remember.

Wardour. I do. That I am not yet a slave. There will be time enough for that when I am married. So—

Ashley. Yes: I will go with you, if only to keep you out of mischief. [*Exeunt.*

Enter LORD DEERSLEY.

Deersley. How fortunate that Normanville should come so opportunely into the market. The limit that I have given to Survey will be sufficient to override all opposition. Thus will the two estates once more be united, and I shall be secured from the annoyance of what in all probability might turn out a disagreeable neighbour. That consideration alone is worth any additional value I may have to pay; for even Deersley would be unbearable with the nuisance of a neighbour like this vulgar coarse-speaking cotton lord. Yes. I have done well in being liberal. Such a price must shut out competition. Good morning, Doctor.

Enter DOCTOR HOYLE.

Doctor. Good morning, my Lord. Has your lordship had the walk I recommended?

Deersley. I have; and a very pleasant one it has been. Never met with Mr. Stapleton once. Doctor, you must learn what stay that person is making here. The place is much too small for both of us.

Doctor. Human nature [*aside*]! Mr. Stapleton has just left by the same train as Mr. Survey, my Lord. I introduced them, and they both got into the same carriage.

Deersley. I am sorry to hear it. If Survey should be communicative and the fellow get to know of my intentions, he might take it into his head to buy the estate out of opposition. Pshaw! I have been too liberal to fear.

His class look too keenly at interest to invest it in acres.

Doctor. Ten per cent. and a bonus. Human nature!

Deersley. If I thought otherwise, I would withdraw all limits.

Doctor. Now if I were an auctioneer — and I should have made a very good auctioneer — I would never knock down any thing out of opposition to a gentleman. But does not half the value fall to your lordship?

Deersley. It does; having been willed by the late owner to his two sisters, of whom the late Countess of Deersley was one.

Doctor. And the other half — to whom does that go?

Deersley. To her sister. But she has not been heard of for upwards of twenty years; and should it be proved that she is dead and has left no issue, the whole would then revert to me.

Doctor. Why, then, should the estate be sold?

Deersley. Henry Manville — the last in tail — was very eccentric, and for five and twenty years preceding his death lived abroad, having, as you are aware, let Normanville to strangers. The reason for his leaving the country was that he had had some misunderstanding with his sisters; and as they were almost dependent upon him, his absence left them in rather straightened circumstances. It was at this time that I met with the Countess, who was on a visit with some mutual friends, and shortly afterwards I married her; but her younger sister — who was of a high free spirit — refused assistance from every one, and sought a retirement which has thus far not been discovered.

Doctor. Perhaps she is dead.

Deersley. There are reasons to believe otherwise, as the

executors have some trace of her. The estate however, by the will, is ordered to be sold and the younger sister's portion funded, until such time as proof of her being dead or alive can be substantiated.

Doctor. Mrs. Stapleton.

Deersley. What of her?

Doctor. She approaches, my Lord.

Deersley. I sometimes think that I have met with Mrs. Stapleton previously. Her appearance seems so familiar to me.

Doctor. The same thought has struck me, my Lord; but when I try to remember where, the vision of her husband makes me think it impossible.

Deersley. It is singular. But Fancy feeds on very slender food.

Enter MRS. STAPLETON.

Mrs. S. Good morning, my Lord; and to you also, Doctor Hoyle.

Deersley. Good morning, Madam. I trust you and your daughters are well.

Mrs. S. Quite well, thank you, my Lord. But have you not seen them to-day? I left them here a short time ago with the understanding that I should return to them.

Deersley. I have not had that pleasure. Doctor, have you met with them?

Doctor. No, my Lord. But I saw Mr. Ashley and Mr. Wardour coming this way; and, if I may venture a conjecture, I would say, by the laws of affinity — for like will attract like, or in plain English, young people will come together — the said gentlemen have taken them under their care, and by this time they are Heaven knows where. Human nature! [*Aside.*

Deersley. Very consoling, Doctor. But rest satisfied, my dear Madam, that if such be the case your daughters are safe.

Doctor. From observation and a knowledge of circumstances, I should say they were doubly safe. [*Aside.*

Mrs. S. I have no fears. My daughters know their position.

Deersley. I do not doubt it. The refined manners of the Miss Stapletons have often surprised me.

Mrs. S. That they are the daughters of a cotton spinner, my Lord?

Deersley. Excuse me, but I was not thinking of Mr. Stapleton.

Mrs. S. It is no offence, my Lord. My husband is proud of his calling. As his wife, I am proud of it too, and of the position which his industry has achieved.

Deersley. You are perfectly right, Madam. There is an honour in such a wealth, which inheritance cannot boast. I was, however, thinking of yourself. Have we not met before?

Mrs. S. Where could that be possible?

Deersley. It is that which puzzles me. You are not Lancashire.

Mrs. S. I am not, my Lord. But I came hither to find my daughters. Your lordship must therefore excuse me if I defer this question of pedigree to some future day.

Deersley. Pardon me if I have trespassed. It was not from idle curiosity that I asked the question.

Mrs. S. Would your lordship assist me in my search?

Deersley. Most willingly, Madam.

[*Exeunt* LORD D. *and* MRS. S.

Doctor. Carte! Tierce! Thrust! Parry! Good. I

could not have fenced better myself. His lordship disarmed and carried off a prisoner. If nature had made me a woman, what a tongue I should have had. [*Exit.*

Enter WARDOUR *and* JESSIE.

Wardour. How often it has been said, that it is the little things of life which make up life's pleasures. They are mere bubbles, it is true; but they serve to hide the depths of the stream over which we glide.

Jessie. Are you fond of philosophizing?

Wardour. Not in a lady's presence. But when you asked me why I had so much pleasure in the flower you gave me, it was the only answer I could return. It made me forget what I would had ne'er been memoried.

Jessie. Have you then regrets, that you would blot out remembrances?

Wardour. All have. A moment's folly has ofttimes to be atoned with a life's repentance.

Jessie. Repentance! Folly. What words are these? You might have committed a murder, Mr. Wardour.

Wardour. Not quite so bad as that, though something akin to it. Suicide! [*Aside.*

Jessie. Manslaughter, perhaps?

Wardour. Something very like to manslaughter.

Jessie. What a dangerous character you must be, and here we are — all alone.

Wardour. Precisely. There is the danger.

Jessie. Oh! I am not in the least afraid.

Wardour. Is there then no fear in being alone with a gentleman?

Jessie. Not if he be a gentleman. I rather like it. Prefer it much to being alone with a lady. You see men are so foolish. They believe all we say.

Wardour. Do they?

Jessie. Besides, with ladies you talk all sorts of nothings — gossip, dress, or scandal, or such like frivolities that women most would prattle of. But with a gentleman you talk — you talk —

Wardour. Yes. You talk —

Jessie. Well. All kinds of delightful things. Balls. Horses. Places. And — and —

Wardour. Yes. And — and —

Jessie. Oh! the things you like to talk about. You must know.

Wardour. Oh yes! I know.

Jessie. But really, Mr. Wardour, why do you ask me?

Wardour. Because I love to hear the ingenuous remarks of a pure mind. There is a freshness in them like to early morning. They are the blossoms which foretell a wealth to come.

Jessie. Poetry is the flattery of words. Are not all men flatterers?

Wardour. Nay. I cannot flatter you. The very artlessness of your disposition disarms praise.

Jessie. Am I, then, simple too?

Wardour. Simplicity is the most charming grace in woman.

Jessie. Really! And what is it when in man?

Wardour. Why, then the man's a fool.

Jessie. I am sorry for the man. [*Enter* ASHLEY *and* LUCY, *crossing.*] Much simplicity there, think you?

Wardour. In the man? No.

Jessie. Then I am sorry for the woman. Shall we join them?

Wardour. Yes. This way. [*Taking her in opposite direction.*

Jessie. Oh! the simplicity of woman.

Ashley. Caution, Tom. Remember.

Wardour. All right, Charley. Trust to me. I will take care you are not interrupted.

[*Exeunt* WARDOUR *and* JESSIE.

Ashley. My cousin is somewhat impetuous. I hope your sister will not mistake his warmth of temperament.

Lucy. Jessie is a shrewd reader of character, and seldom makes mistakes. In that she is much my superior.

Ashley. I should not think so.

Lucy. Oh yes! Mama tells me that I believe every one's story, and it leaves me open to imposition.

Ashley. The confidence which springs from innocency and truth is virtue's jewel, and shines with a lustre which keenness and finesse know not. It is a very star of purity, and sits on woman's brow a coronet of light. I would not have you different.

Lucy. You would not lead me wrong?

Ashley. Do not fear. I would guide you but aright — where your trust should find such security that the slightest doubt dare not show itself. Will you confide in me?

Lucy. How confide in you?

Ashley. Believe that I have your welfare at heart. Let me watch over you. Trust me as your dearest friend. I would not intrude myself upon you if unwelcome; but I am anxious that our acquaintance should not end with only a casual friendship.

Lucy. You are very kind. Our acquaintance need not terminate with this sea-side visit if you wish it otherwise. My parents, I am sure, would be pleased if at any time you were to visit us.

Ashley. And you?

Lucy. It will make me very happy to see you again.

But my father is only a cotton spinner, and you are the son of a peer. How would you reconcile such a friendship?

Ashley. Let us walk, and I will tell you. [*Exeunt.*

Enter DOCTOR HOYLE.

Doctor. It is strange how amazingly cunning couples are in making themselves invisible. I have traced them by their feet marks; by which also I can see they are paired and not all together, but a large pair of shoes and a small pair of shoes going in one direction, and a large pair of shoes and a small pair of shoes going in another direction. That's human nature! It needs no prophet to foretell what's brewing. Valentine's day happens in more months than February.

Enter LORD DEERSLEY *and* MRS. STAPLETON.

Deersley. Well, Doctor. Have you seen them?

Doctor. Not exactly, my Lord. But I have seen their foot-prints on the sands, and, like Robinson Crusoe, I concluded the cannibals were not far off.

Deersley. It is a strange comparison, Doctor, to liken them to cannibals.

Doctor. I might be wider the mark, my Lord, for they seem likely, as they are going on, to be ready to eat one another shortly.

Mrs. S. You do not think anything improper?

Doctor. Improper! Oh no — not improper! Human nature! from a medical point of view, that is all. We are not all Malthusians. See now where they come. Like birds in spring time. A pair here. A pair there. It is a pretty conjunction.

Enter, from opposite directions, ASHLEY *and* LUCY, WARDOUR *and* JESSIE.

Deersley. Charles! Tom!
Wardour. Oh, my prophetic soul!
Ashley. The governor!
Lucy. } Mama!
Jessie. }
Mrs. S. Girls!
Doctor. Mutual recognition.

An interval of several months between the first and second Acts.

ACT II.

SCENE. — *The estate, with view of the old castle of Normanville, stream with bridge, &c.*

Enter MR. *and* MRS. STAPLETON, LUCY *and* JESSIE.

Mr. S. Aw loike th' place better th' moor aw see on it, an' as it gi'es thee pleasur', owd lass, aw'm fain aw bowt it.

Mrs. S. That is very kind of you, Robert.

Mr. S. Not a bit on it. Thae's bin a gradely soort o' a woif to me, an' browt up th' wenches loike ladies, an' aw've never regretted marryin' thee yet, — though thae had no' mich o' a fortin, if aw except thy pratty looks an' ways, an' thy eddycashun.

Mrs. S. Let us forget those days, dear.

Mr. S. Forget 'em! Never. Aw'm not ashamed o' thee, lass, an' aw think aw've made brass enoof to ma' thee proud o' me, an' now thae's gett'n a lord's neest for thy own, thae con lady it wi' th' best on 'em.

Lucy. Oh mama! see what a beautiful view of the old castle there is from here.

Mrs. S. Yes, dear. It is considered the finest view on the estate. I brought you here that you might see it.

Mr. S. It sartinly is foine. Now, who'd ever a thowt a felly loike me 'ud ever ha' bin worth a pleck loike this? It's enoof to ma' a chap proud.

Jessie. See! There is some one fishing.

Mr. S. Fishin'? Maybe it's somb'dy poachin'. Aw mun stop that game. Aw'll ha' nob'dy poachin' or trespassin' oather on my land.

Jessie. He is not a poacher, papa. I can see he is a gentleman.

Mr. S. Gentleman! They're th' biggest poachers o' onny, an' ha' moost impudence i' dooin it. Wheer is he?

Jessie. Yonder, by the willow trees. I believe it is Mr. Wardour; and now that I look again, I see that he is on Lord Deersley's side of the stream.

Mr. S. Good for him. If aw ketch him poachin' owt o' mine, aw'll see he does no' laugh at me for nowt.

Lucy. Yes, dear. It is Mr. Wardour. And — and — he is alone.

Mrs. S. Robert, this is very delightful. I am sure it is as proud a moment for you as it is for me.

Mr. S. Aw am proud. But aw'se be prouder yet. For now aw am heer aw meean to tache these bumpkins summat they dunnot know.

Mrs. S. How, dear?

Mr. S. By representin' 'em i' parliament. Theer's gooin to be an election i' two months, an' th' liberals want somb'dy to represent 'em. They sen aw'm just th' mon for 'em.

Lucy. You, papa! A member of parliament?

Mr. S. An' whoy not, lass. Aw've lots o' brass.

Jessie. Well done, governor! What a statesman you will make! Order for the honorable member's speech! Take my advice, papa, — give them a song instead, and let it be your old favorite: [*Sings.*

"Sed Jone to his woif on a wot Summer's day,
Aw'm resolvit i' Grenfelt no lunger to stay,
But aw'll go to Owdham as fast as I con,
So fare the' weel, Grenfelt, an' fare the' weel Nan.
For a sowjer aw'll be,
An' brave Owdham aw'll see,
An' aw'll have a battle wi' th' French."

(Old Lancashire ballad.)

Mr. S. Well, Jess, aw con sing that moderately weel, an' maybe better nor spakin. But they'n gett'n spakers enoof i' parliament. Aw'se be a thinker.

Mrs. S. Had you not better leave politics, my dear, to those who have been educated for such an occupation — to such as have a higher qualification than the pocket. The country already suffers too much from such statesmanship. Do you think you would be in your right place in parliament?

Mr. S. Aw shud if aw wur elected.

Mrs. S. For what purpose?

Mr. S. To ennunciate thoose great principles o' liberty which are th' birthreet o' every Englishman;—that a mon shall think as he loikes, say as he loikes, an' do as he loikes. An' theer shall be nob'dy to say nay to owt as he oather thinks, says, or does. Theer! That's liberty!

Mrs. S. I should rather call it licence. To extend liberty, further than we at present enjoy it, might be dangerous, and the very destruction of liberty. Can we not already think as much good, say as much good, and do as much good as we like, without anyone to say nay to it? What more do you want in the way of liberty?

Mr. S. Lots. But aw'm not gooin to argufy wi' thee, lass. Aw've tried it for three-an'-twenty yer an' never had th' best o' that game yet; for aw'm sure if a woman wur to ta' up politics for a discussion hoo'd shut up th' Lord Chancellor hissel. So we'll goo on wi' our inspection. Come on, lasses.

Jessie. All right, papa. Lucy, love, let us stray behind, and when papa and mama have got some distance before us we will steal away for a stroll by ourselves.

Lucy. But supposing we meet Mr. Wardour.

Jessie. Well. Yes. If we did. I should certainly like

to know if he has caught any fish. Besides we might meet Mr. Ashley also.

Lucy. Just as you like, dear. Anything to please you.

Mrs. S. My dears, are you coming?

Lucy. Yes, Mama.

Jessie. He has given up fishing, and is coming this way.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter ASHLEY *and* WARDOUR, *meeting.*

Ashley. Well, Tom, what sport?

Wardour. So very indifferent, Charley, that I have resigned my rod and basket to the keeper. Have you any news of our neighbours?

Ashley. They have broken covert, and, I believe, at the present moment are making a round of the estate.

Wardour. Huzza!

Ashley. So say I. But the governor is dreadfully annoyed, and, I almost fear, for several reasons, he will seclude himself entirely from them. In the first place, he cannot forgive the buying of the estate. Secondly, it has transpired that Stapleton is a radical, and has already been waited upon by his party to allow himself to be put in nomination for the borough in opposition to the governor's nominee.

Wardour. That is yourself.

Ashley. Probably; though the honor has not yet been announced. The greatest annoyance, however, is in the Stapletons having come to reside here.

Wardour. Then it must be our duty to reconcile the enemy. A pleasing task, Charley, when we think of the ladies who, I venture to say, will, before many weeks have elapsed, be considered quite an acquisition to the

neighbourhood. The memory of our acquaintance in Wales has been to me one long and delightful reminiscence.

Ashley. If their presence be hailed with such enthusiasm by you, what must it be to me?

Wardour. Where is the difference?

Ashley. Everywhere. I am free! You are engaged!

Wardour. Hang the engagement! Is it ever to be thrust in my face?

Ashley. Strong language!

Wardour. Look here, Charley! I shall fulfil my engagement at all costs, though I look upon it as a trap in which my youth — not my manhood — was ensnared. Yes, my hand goes with my word to your cousin, but my heart —

Ashley. Is it anothers?

Wardour. I know not. It is no matter. My duty is before me. As a gentleman, I shall follow it.

Ashley. Wardour, this is sorry news to me. Forgive me if I have wounded you; and in return for your confidence let me tell you, I also am in love.

Wardour. You! With whom?

Ashley. With whom would you think?

Wardour. Nay, I cannot imagine.

Ashley. What say you then to one of the Miss Stapletons?

Wardour. One of the Miss Stapletons! Which?

Ashley. That I can scarcely decide. The quiet beauty of Lucy is met by the sparkling warmth of Jessie, and when my memory would dwell upon the charms of the one, the figure of the other is sure to arise to usurp its dominion.

Wardour. And is it love to halt between two likes? or,

is it but a fancy, — as you would snatch a flower and cast it aside for a fickle whim in favor of another?

Ashley. Call it what you will — like or love — it is all the same. On one of the two, however, I am resolved, and you shall help my choice.

Wardour. Then let it be Lucy.

Ashley. Now I would have wagered you would have said Jessie.

Wardour. No; Lucy. She is best suited to you.

Ashley. To that I might take exception. You see my disposition is naturally quiet. I love retirement, and from the busy world would seek the shade. Think then, in my secluded hours, how the spirit of such a dear creature as Jessie would animate me, — making each solitary moment fly, o'erladen with her mirthfulness.

Wardour. No. You would be like oil and water. You would never agree. With Lucy — whose disposition seems fitted for you — your life would be one long day of love, and in each other's minds you both would see the reflex of the joy that each would love the best.

Ashley. That would be the very cloying of love. In myself I have all things that my own fancy favors. But in another — whose opposite creates new likes — love is ever new. Then her person —

Wardour. Imagination paints as most it fancies.

Ashley. I admit, beauty is but liking. But confess, Tom, — if there be a bit of your heart still whole, — to Jessie's loveliness. Is she not a fascinating creature? So graceful — like the fawn on a summer's eve as it flits across the glade; so full of life and joy too — like the lark, as it breasts heaven's firmament and fills the world with song. Then as to her features! Look in her eyes — those laughing eyes that make pale the meridian day;

those rosy cheeks — that mock the peach's bloom; those pouting lips —

Wardour. Oh! I shall go mad.

Ashley. Is the description so very enchanting?

Wardour. Enchanting! It is the incantation of the fiend that tempts men's souls to ruin. It is the mocking of a hellish spite that drives misery to despair. It is — Oh! but you do not know, or you would not wound me thus.

Ashley. Do you love her? I am amazed!

Wardour. Love her? It is the dream in which my every fancy lives! All hope — joy — thought — feeling — everything — is bound in her. But oh! betwixt us such a gulf — a barrier impassable. My plighted troth oppresses me like a nightmare. I dare not love. I would not do her such dishonor.

Ashley. Wardour, I have trifled with you. Had you counselled Jessie, I might with greater warmth have spoken in Lucy's praise; for truth to say, — Jessie is not my choice.

Wardour. Nay! You are free. I have no election.

Ashley. Say not so! If you do not choose to wed my cousin, your heart being another's, better a thousand times the contract should be broken. What woman would exchange her love for a mere name? She who would do this is not worthy to be wifed; and to offer a hand without a heart is a life's insult.

Wardour. My word!

Ashley. Spoken before you knew your heart. The beguilement of a sunny hour that bears a summer's tempest in its train. Go to her and confess yourself. Your pledge is not more honorable than truth.

Wardour. Charles, I cannot; though I feel your counsel just. No! It must not be. You love —

Ashley. Lucy! When I confessed my love I sought in honest purpose to engage discussion, and make my choice more dear. I thought by naming Jessie you would descant in Lucy's praise, and I should hear from other's lips encomiums of her worth that would minister to love, and make me feel more vain of mine election. It was an idle thought, I do assure you. If I have wounded you I am sorry. Yet do I scarce regret, for it hath bared your heart's most holy secret, and made me know how best to service you. I shall go —

Wardour. No, no!—not a step—not a word to change the bias of your cousin's hopes, as you do call me friend. I do forbid it. I am in a maze; but heaven, — not man, — must help me out of it. You have my secret. I charge you keep it sacred. But see! Lord Deersley and the Doctor come this way; make my excuses,— I would not meet them now. [*Exit.*

Ashley. It is a sad heart that loves without return; but loving and being beloved, — knowing that it must end in disappointment—is a sorrow that has no comfort. Poor Tom! I deeply sympathize with you; and now that I have your secret I must study how best I can use it for your interests. Good morning, sir. Good morning, Doctor.

Enter LORD DEERSLEY *and* DOCTOR.

Doctor. Good morning, Mr. Charles.

Deersley. Was not that Wardour who has just left you?

Ashley. It was.

Deersley. Why should he avoid us? He evidently saw us as we came.

Ashley. He is not well. He desired me to make his apologies to you for leaving so abruptly.

Doctor. Not well! Then I will at once go after him. Have I a friend that aileth, and will not physic him?

Ashley. There is no necessity, I assure you, Doctor. He hath already prescribed for himself a long walk, and seeketh no other remedy.

Doctor. Then I will follow him, and see that the medicine be properly administered. Walking is my forte.

Ashley. You would not leave my father, sir? [*Stopping him.*

Deersley. Doctor, you had better stay where you are. Your company there is evidently not desired. Besides I want your advice about a matter concerning Charles.

Doctor. Mr. Charles! I will prescribe for him with all the skill of my profession.

Deersley. I did not mean medically, but politically.

Doctor. How so, my Lord?

Deersley. The elections take place in two months, and I have been solicited by our party to allow Charles's name to be put in nomination for the borough.

Ashley. It is an honor, sir, I scarcely yet looked for.

Deersley. Why not? You are now five-and-twenty. You have had an education befitting such a career, and it is time you used the abilities, which I believe you have, for your country's good.

Doctor. The Ashleys are statesmen by nature. They imbibe eloquence with their breath, and the art of government is to them an instinct. Did I not predict at the last meeting of the Shropshire agriculturists, when Mr. Charles proposed "The Society," that he was to be our future member? I congratulate you, sir [*to Charles*], on the greatness that awaits you.

Deersley. Success is not of clay, that it can be moulded by an infant's hand. It is the hardest marble, and must

be chiseled bit by bit, by patient and enduring skill, until it assumes perfection. So he — who as a statesman would succeed — must work to high and holy purpose. In honor, bold; in truth, erect; in uprightness, supreme; His aim — his country's good. Then shall he live recorded with the great, and find his reward in the prosperity of the people.

Doctor. True, my Lord. But your modern politician puts party before principle, and power above honesty. So that a majority be commanded, what matters with him the welfare of the state.

Deersley. Such is not statesmanship. At best it is but a pinchbeck patriotism, though it dazzles fools who mistake it for the purer metal.

Doctor. Oh, that I had been in parliament!

Ashley. You would have been a model member, Doctor, without doubt.

Enter MR. STAPLETON.

Mr. S. Lord Deersley, good mornin'; an' to yo too, gentlemen. I hope yo're weel. Yo seen aw've cum to be yer neighbour.

Deersley. So I understand, Mr. Stapleton.

Mr. S. An' as we'n met afore aw trust we'se noather on us be strangers. Aw'se be glad to see yo at onny toim yo loike to pop in.

Deersley. Sir, I do not visit much. You must excuse me.

Mr. S. Well, well, yo con pleeaz yoresel. If yo connot foind toim to co' on me, maybe aw con foind toim to cum an' see yo, so it 'll be as brode as lung.

Doctor. It is customary, Mr. Stapleton, for strangers to wait until they are first called upon.

Mr. S. Is it? When aw want thy advoice, Doctor, aw'll send for thee, an' pay thee thy fee.

Ashley. I hope Mrs. Stapleton and your daughters are well.

Mr. S. Aye, aye, they're reet enoof! Cum an' see 'em, lad; thae'll be welcum. That is, if it's what yo co'n etiquette, an' if thy fayther 'll let thee.

Deersley. My son, sir, is of that age that he does not require my advice as to whom he shall visit.

Mr. S. So aw shud say. But aw see how th' woind blows, — easterly by th' looks on't. Aw reckon yo're vext becose aw bowt th' place. Yo had no need, for aw paid for it pratty smartly, thanks to yo, my Lord.

Deersley. Had I had any knowledge of your intentions, sir, you should have paid for it more smartly still.

Mr. S. Aw cud ha' done that. Wheer aw cum fro' they sen aw stink o' brass, an' as yore agent towd me it 'ud be chep to yo at so mich, aw thowt it 'ud be chep to me at a bit moor, for aw fancied th' place an' made up my moind to buy it so what it fetched.

Deersley. I suppose, sir, you did not inform Mr. Survey of your intentions to be a purchaser.

Mr. S. Did aw eccles as loike! Aw never show my hond at a game o' crib, an' when my adversary forgets to score aw ollus peg on.

Deersley. And could you act so meanly, sir, as to worm my instructions from Mr. Survey in order to use the information against me.

Mr. S. Oh! he did no' want mich pumpin'. But co' it sharp, meeans an ugly word. Yo seen theer's different ways o' lookin' at things.

Deersley. I thank heaven there are.

Mr. S. Just so. An' as aw've no animosity aw freely

forgi'e yo. Neighbours shud no' quarrel yo know'n. Besoides aw'm gooin to put up for th' borough, an' aw'se want o' th' influence aw con get.

Doctor. You put up for the borough! Let me remind you, Mr. Stapleton —

Mr. S. Bobs, bobs, mon! What a row in a pill box! Thae'rt givin' thy advoice gratis agen. Let me tell thee summat. If ever thae does owt for nowt for onnybody, let it be for thysel'. Thae'll thrive better if thae'll stick to that. What does thae know about politics?

Doctor. Sir, I have made politics and the art of statesmanship my study, sir; and I flatter myself if there is one thing that I understand better than another it is government, sir.

Mr. S. Stick to thy physic, mon, an' dunnot be a foo'.

Ashley. You are rather too hard upon the Doctor, Mr. Stapleton.

Mr. S. Every mon has his trade. The nearer a cobbler sticks to his last the moor he's a' whoam.

Ashley. Yet you seek to enter parliament.

Mr. S. Commerce is politics. My trade is commerce. But what's thoine?

Ashley. Politics.

Mr. S. Politics — fiddlestick!

Ashley. As your opponent for the borough, I also seek to enter parliament.

Mr. S. Thee! First finish wi' gooin to skoo. Lads shud no' handle razzurs 'til they'n gett'n beards.

Deersley. My son, sir, has been educated with the view of serving his country in parliament; and, as he has left school, let me recommend the vacancy, occasioned by his absence, to one to whom an acquaintance with that institution might be useful.

Mr. S. Varry loike, my Lord. Eddycashun cums i' moor ways than thro' a hornbook. But he's a loikely lad, an' weel favvur'd, an' if aw mista' not aw've two wenches a' whoam who think'n moor o' him an' his cousin than they dun o' their Kattykesm.

Deersley. I am sorry to hear it. Though my son is free to choose where he will amongst his peers, my nephew is already engaged to marry his cousin Sophia, and therefore can never reciprocate the feeling. But I will wish you good morning, sir. Charles and I have some business to attend to.

Mr. S. Bis'ness! Aw'm glad to hear it. Aw thowt folk i'th' country had never owt to do. Good mornin'; good mornin'. [*Exeunt* DEERSLEY, CHARLES *and* DOCTOR.] So that's my opponent! He'll be a suckin' member if they elect him. Chickens shud larn to peearch afore they begin to crow. If aw connot lick him as a parliament mon aw'm a foo'. But that Mr. Wardour's gooin to marry his cousin 's a moor serious do. Aw mun look to it. Hearts are no' playthings. [*Exit.*

Enter LUCY *and* JESSIE, *looking anxiously about.*

Jessie. How provoking! They are nowhere to be seen—not a trace of them—and such a beautiful day for a walk. Even the poor fish are neglected, and have nobody to catch them. I could sit down and cry, that I could.

Lucy. Had we not better go home, dear, and help mama with her arrangements for the poultry yard.

Jessie. Bother the poultry! What's the use of them when there is no one to eat the eggs.

Lucy. But mama might not like our meeting Mr. Wardour or Mr. Ashley alone.

Jessie. Of course not. Mamas never do. They were never guilty of a sly stroll with anybody. How did they get married, think you? Do you suppose some one came and plucked them like ripe fruit, and made them wives without a word of notice? Not a bit of it. They were just as fond of the preliminaries as we are.

Lucy. But prudence, dear. Do you think Mr. Ashley or Mr. Wardour would admire presumption in a woman?

Jessie. No more than a woman admires bashfulness in a man.

> Women with men must modest be to tease,
> And men be bold who most would women please.

You see I know all about it, dear. But you need not fear for my prudence. I detest a forward woman as much as, I believe, the men do.

Lucy. [*Alarmedly*] Oh, Jessie, dear!

Jessie. What is the matter, love?

Lucy. I think there is Mr. Wardour coming.

Jessie. You dear duck! — where? I was afraid that you had seen something dreadful.

Lucy. Oh yes. Let us return home.

Jessie. Don't be stupid! You are surely not frightened at a man? Why they are the most delightful things in creation — next to us. Now you go to the top of yonder hill, and look carefully round, for depend upon it Mr. Ashley is not far off.

Lucy. And leave you alone?

Jessie. Never fear for me. I shall be equal to the occasion.

Lucy. Well, dear, I wont be long. [*Exit.*

Jessie. How my heart goes pit-a-pat, to be sure. Oh dear! I feel as if I were going to be afraid, and wished to run away like Lucy. But I could not if I would; my

limbs would not let me, and leave my heart behind. He comes. I will retire a little.

Enter WARDOUR.

Wardour. What if she were to hear of my engagement, and every one here has heard of it? Perhaps already some kind friend has been officious enough to mention it. Such information is always ready gossip. I cannot bear to think of it, — yet the thought haunts me. It were best that I should confess my love for her, and put an end to this miserable suspense, and, if she accepts me, write at once to my cousin, revealing everything. Heavens! — Jessie! [*Seeing her.*

Jessie. Mr. Wardour!

Wardour. I ask your pardon, I should have said Miss Jessie.

Jessie. The salutation of a friend is readily pardoned which offends only in warmth.

Wardour. The truth is, that I was so delighted at having met with you, that I forgot all forms of ceremony. I had heard of your arrival, and was anxious to see you. Even then I was thinking of you.

Jessie. How very kind of you, Mr. Wardour, that you should spare a thought for me.

Wardour. Spare a thought for her! — then she has heard of it [*aside*]. True, Miss Jessie, I do spare many thoughts for you. Why should I not?

Jessie. Our acquaintance was so very limited, that —

Wardour. Yes.

Jessie. I thought some one more deserving of your remembrance might cause you to forget me.

Wardour. Some one more deserving! She credits it [*aside*]. Nay, believe me, Miss Jessie, I am in earnest

in what I say. Since we met in Wales I have thought very much and dearly of you.

Jessie. It is very pleasant to know, that in your absence, you have the sincere remembrances of a friend.

Wardour. Sincere remembrances! She doubts me. I must undeceive her; I must declare my love, let the consequences be what they may. [*Aside.*

Enter STAPLETON, *who, seeing them, retires.*

Mr. S. Aw suspected this. The villain! But aw mun ha'e proofs, — aw mun be cautious. [*Aside.*

Wardour. [*Taking her hand.*] Forgive me if I make too free. I have a burden here which sometimes makes life almost unendurable. A secret! I would it were yours. But no; I should offend you then, and you would spurn me from you.

Jessie. You are free to speak your mind without offence if so you wish, or still be silent if you think it better.

Wardour. When last we met it was to say farewell. Some months have passed since then; but you will remember how I kept your hand, and held you still from parting. I would have spoken all that I felt, for my heart was full, and I had much to tell: how we had grown companioned, — how much I thought of you. But my tongue refused its office, and we parted silently.

Mr. S. A guilty conscience has a dumb advocate. [*Aside.*

Wardour. The flower you gave me I have since treasured, and it has become a niche in which enshrined sits your memory. So every look, and word of yours is tabled in my heart, and in the silent solitary hours I con them like a miser o'er his hord — precious as life.

Mr. S. Is not this enoof? The villain! [*Aside.*

Wardour. Forgive me then if now I speak more plainly, and ask the right to woo you. I love you. Can heart say truer? Jessie, darling, speak to me. Will you be mine? Oh, I will win you honorably.

Jessie. How shall I answer you? My maiden lips would still be coy, as best befits me; but my love, as from my beating heart, leaps up and opens them with joy.

Wardour. [*Clasping her to him.*] Then be for ever mine. By this fond kiss I claim you.

Mr. S. [*Advancing.*] Never!

Wardour. Who dares —

Mr. S. Her feyther! By the power that nature gave aw hurl thy vows back i' thy teeth that they may choke thee wi' their falseness. Thou lov'st her noan, an' it is perjury to thy soul when thou dost say so.

Jessie. Oh, no, no! Dear father, say not so.

Mr. S. Aw tell thee, lass, he is a liar who has forsworn hissel. He has before this plighted troth, an' is as good as wedded to another.

Wardour. No, no! I love no other.

Mr. S. It's not an hour sin' that aw yerd it. Lord Deersley towd me. Is he a liar? Aye,— hang thy yed. Deceit deceives itsel, but shame sits not on honor's brow.

Jessie. Dear father,—forbear! There is some mystery in this. Oh, sir,— Mr. Wardour, — it is not true? Say it is not true. Ask but for time to prove it false. I will believe you still.

Mr. S. Ax his cousin Sophy, lass. Aw tell thee he is affianced to her, an' never con be thoine.

Jessie. No, no, — oh, no! Pity — [*Swoons.*

Mr. S. [*Supporting her.*] Howd up, lass. Howd up, my bonnie bairn. Nay, nay, — be brave. Theer's better men nor him.

An interval of two months between the second and third Acts.

ACT III.

SCENE. — *A room in Normanville.*

MR. *and* MRS. STAPLETON *seated.*

Mrs. S. Be patient, dear. All may yet be well. Forget not there is One above who governs all things. His ruling is the best.

Mr. S. Aw suppose patience is th' physic for disappointment. It's bitter takkin', an' aw've swallowed moor on it sin aw cum here, than ever aw did afore. Despised an' insulted by th' gentry. Patience. My child, my bonnie Jessie, — mocked, broken hearted, an' deein wi' her stricken love. Still patience. An' now aw'm rejected for th' borough. It's weel to counsel patience.

Mrs. S. Parliament, my dear, as I have often told you, was never your forte. Had you been elected you would have been miserable, for you would have been out of your sphere. As a country gentleman you may lead a happier life.

Mr. S. What, — to be sent to coventry by my neighbours? Nob'dy to spake to, or to visit wi'; shut up i' my own estate; a prisoner i' my own house. That's a promisin' bill o' fare to pick a meal o' happiness fro'.

Mrs. S. That may not be our neighbours' fault. Remember when you first came here that you held yourself rather above the gentlemen of the county, — told some of them in fact that you could buy them up.

Mr. S. So aw cud. They gen theirsels sich airs aw

cud no' stond it. Aw'm as good as them onny day, an' a bit better nor sum. So aw towd 'em. They'n noan so mich brass that they need'n swagger so.

Mrs. S. They are the representatives of old families. The virtues and the chivalry of generations are theirs, and they look back with pride on an unstained ancestry. Is not such a heritage before gold? Besides they are not poor. They are in possession of estates which yield incomes above their wants. Think you then they will suffer one who has but wealth at his back to lord it over them?

Mr. S. Aw tell yo aw'm as good as them.

Mrs. S. As a man, who said you were not? It was when you claimed to be better, and arrogated to measure your position by your wealth that your claim was denied. Believe me, the country gentlemen are ever ready to welcome accessions to their ranks, but the conditions are that they must also be gentlemen, and seek their society on a footing of equality, — not of pre-eminence.

Mr. S. Am aw not a gentleman? Aw've brass enoof.

Mrs. S. A gentleman is one who treats with respect the claims of others, and assumes no superiority above his neighbours. It is not necessary that he should be highly educated, though education refines a man. It is not imperative that he should have been used to good society, though society polishes a man. But his heart should ever feel for, and his manners show respect to, others, — for he is the gentleman who is gentle to all.

Mr. S. Aw tell thee what, owd lass, sin' we wur wed thae's read me sum strange lessons, an', as aw beleev aw've bin th' better for 'em, it ud be wrung if I did no' listen to 'em. But this is th' strangest ov o'—that money does no' ma' a gentleman. Someheaw aw fancy thae'rt

reet too, for when aw bethinken me theer's summat tells me that brass is no' everythin', an' theer's better things nor it,—thae art, for I con feel it. Bless thee, lass, thae's bin a true helpmate to me, though aw've bin but a rough companion to thee.

Mrs. S. To me you have been ever good and gentle. I know your heart, that it is true. A plain casket may hold the richest jewel.

Mr. S. That's loike a complement, an' aw ollus think complements loike plaisters on sore places, — they sarve to hide if they dunnot cure 'em. How is hoo, Doctor?

Enter DOCTOR HOYLE.

Doctor. I am afraid no better. Have you observed any change?

Mrs. S. None. She still cherishes her sorrow as something precious, and, in this melancholy, lives as one that has no hope.

Mr. S. Poor lass. Hoo wur so brave; so full o' life; her feyther's joy. Doctor, she munnot dee. Bring her but round, an' gi'e her back to me the merry thing she wur. Aw'll ma' thee rich, — rich wi' such a fee that it shall jingle o' thy days.

Doctor. I fear no skill of mine can save her.

Mrs. S. How if she were to travel?

Doctor. I would have counselled it, but she is much too weak.

Mrs. S. Is there no hope?

Doctor. One only that I know of — that Wardour should renew his suit to her.

Mr. S. Never! He has deceived her once, an' mocked her heart's affection wi' a lie. How then? Are feelins toys to sport wi'? He that is bankrupt i' one

sich vow, let him not dare to pay another 'til he's redeemed the first.

Doctor. I do not think Mr. Wardour ever loved any but your daughter.

Mr. S. What? Did no' Lord Deersley tell me he wur engaged to marry his cousin?

Doctor. An engagement made to secure family interests, but not of his seeking.

Mrs. S. If the engagement still exists how can you advise he should renew his suit to our daughter?

Doctor. Because he loves her and she loves him. It's human nature. By it two are made happy, in the place of three miserable.

Mrs. S. Say no more. He is not free. It is idle to waste time in planning impossibilities.

Doctor. How if she were to die?

Mrs. S. Why then Heaven's will be done. Man's arm is flesh. So let it rest with Him. But Charity shall whisper o'er her grave, — her angel messengers may hear.

Doctor. Good will follow good; so let it be.

Mr. S. Have yo no moor than this?

Doctor. None, — but that she desired me as I left her to solicit your benevolence on behalf of a poor farmer who has lost his all by fire. He has a large family, and by this calamity is totally ruined unless assisted by the goodness of others. Here are all the particulars, with a list of the sums already subscribed. [*Giving book.*

Mr. S. Givin' is the priviledge o'th' good,—she is good. [*Reads.*] What's this? Lord Deersley, two hundred pounds! Is that so, — what meeans it?

Doctor. I do not understand you, sir.

Mr. S. Is 't true, or is it but a bait to gild the trap?

a sham to ma' a start wi'. Sich things are done. So names get tinselled wi' unlawful honors.

Doctor. Here is the cheque Lord Deersley gave me.

Mr. S. It's ollus thus. Wheerever aw goo th' imprimatur o' that family 's stamped on every noble deed. Deersley alms' houses; Deersley skoos; Deersley charities o' ev'ry soort. The varry church restored by 'em, an' even th' best proizes at th' agricultural show are their gifts. [*Sits down at table with book.*] Nawe, aw connot giv'. [*Writes.*] That's moor loike. By th' soid o' sich my name is no' fit to stond. [*Returns book.*

Doctor. [*Reading.*] Miss Jessie Stapleton, two hundred pounds! Sir, this is indeed noble; this is charity. The spirit which dictated it be your reward. I thank you, sir.

Mr. S. Thank her. Charity's an angel's hond,—moine's but a mortal's.

Mrs. S. Robert, it was an angel's heart suggested it. I thank you, too.

Enter SERVANT, *handing cards.*

Mr. S. Lord Deersley! Mr. Ashley! Show 'em up, John. [*Exit Servant.*] What meeans it, woif? This is summut moor nor visitin'.

Mrs. S. Something of importance, my dear, no doubt.

Mr. S. It connot be about th' election, for that's done wi'; an' yet theer's nowt else 'ud bring 'em heer that aw know on. Aye,—it mun be to shake honds an' be friends agen after th' licken they'n gen me. Weel, aw've no animosity; they'n bin straightforrud a' through.

Enter LORD DEERSLEY *and* ASHLEY.

Mr. S. Lord Deersley, yo're welcum; and yo too, Mr. Ashley. It wur a manly feight, an' aw wur fairly byett'n;

an', sin th' grey mare's bin lecturin' me a bit, aw winnot say but th' best mon's gett'n in after o'. Heer's my hond to yo.

Deersley. Thank you, Mr. Stapleton. This is very kind of you,— very kind. It was not, however, any matter relating to the election that brought me here.

Mr. S. Aw' ma' no complaints; i' love an' war o's fair.

Deersley. Having then done with war let us speak of love. Ah,— Mrs. Stapleton, I trust I see you well. How is your daughter?

Mrs. S. No improvement, my Lord,—we fear the worst.

Deersley. Let us hope for the better. It is on her account I have now called. Indeed to be frank, I come as a suitor; not for myself, but for one who regrets exceedingly that he did not proceed in a more honorable manner when he wooed her himself. Being, however, contracted, for family reasons, to another, for whom he never really entertained a right affection, he felt it impossible, when his love overcame his resolution, to tell your daughter everything, and blindly trusted to chance to help him out of the difficulty. With the sad result of this conduct your daughter has suffered severely. He also has suffered: but through a recent occurrence, which is no less than the elopement (with a previous lover) of the lady to whom he was engaged, he is now free, and has requested me to ask your permission that he may be allowed to offer his hand to your daughter, as the only reparation he can make for the past.

Mr. S. This is a strange proposal, my Lord, to cum fro' yo.

Deersley. My family, Mr. Stapleton, has injured yours. I express my deep sorrow for it, as it is my duty, and take

this the first opportunity of offering what, I believe, can be the only satisfaction.

Mr. S. Lord Deersley, yo're a gentleman. Yo've twice conquered me. Aw love my daughter, see yo, wi' o' a parent's love, an' aw wud see her live. This is her life. Wheer is yore nephy?

Ashley. My cousin stays without, and awaits your answer.

Mr. S. Speed to him, an' say he's welcum. [*Exit Ashley.*] Theer is in life a gowden thread which links us unto heaven, — it is God's mercy. A silver cord too binds us unto earth in our affections; when that is snapped the gowd alone unites to better things, but whilst it holds we are but worldlings still, an' live in thoose we love.

Mrs. S. Had we not better prepare her for this change?

Mr. S. At once. Her ebbing life will wait to hear this news.

Doctor. Be careful, sir. Let us consult how best to break it to her. To announce it too suddenly might be fatal.

Mrs. S. The Doctor is right. In my boudoir we shall not be interrupted. Come, then.

Deersley. It is the best, Mr. Stapleton, — precipitancy might indeed be serious.

Mr. S. Wi' o' my heart. It is her life, — it is her life. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter LUCY, *supporting* JESSIE.

Lucy. Nay, dear, you are better. Your steps are lighter. You have borne less on me than yesterday. [*Laying her on the sofa.*

Jessie. I am better! Dear sister, do not think so. I am young; and you think the spring, — despite this winter's chill, — may burst anew with life. Vain hope! My

future here is narrowed into days. It will not be for long. Could I but see him once again, and tell him the love I carry to my grave!

Lucy. Do not, my dear, speak thus. You must forget him.

Jessie. In death, — but not before. He loved me. Unfettered by this contract, his heart was wholly mine. Why should I forget him? Give me those flowers. They are from Deersley, I think you said. How fragrantly they smell. When I am dead, I would such flowers should blossom o'er my grave. I should then be memoried in their perfumes. Who sent them me?

Lucy. Mr. Ashley brought them, dear.

Jessie. He was Love's messenger. The hand that culled them was another's. Poor, poor, heart, — beggared to this. Tell him, dear sister, when I am gone, how much I thanked him. I hope he may be happy.

Lucy. Be composed, my love; the Doctor said you must not talk. Nay, do not weep; it is necessary that you should keep calm.

Jessie. If I am dumb, my thoughts are busy still, and fill each dreaming fancy with his remembrance. Nay, chide me not, it is my only solace. But I weary, and my senses steal unto sleep. There I forget the world — all, all but him. It cannot be a sin to love. Dear Wardour. Sister. Thanks. [*Sleeps.*

Lucy. She sleeps, and thus from hour to hour she talks and sleeps and dreams her life away. So young. Dear, darling sister, may heaven be merciful, and bless your waking.

Enter ASHLEY *and* WARDOUR.

Lucy. Charles! Mr. Wardour! What do you here?

Oh, sir, — see where the remnant of your love burns out like a wasted taper! Have pity on her, and with such respect as her poor unrequited love may claim, forswear this place! Nay, I entreat you! Charles, I implore —

Wardour. Oh, rarest chance! This sleep is heaven's gift, sent in its mercy that I might again behold my sweet, and wake her from inauspicious dreams once more to love.

Ashley. Do not disturb him. He is free to woo your sister, and has your father's full consent. Let us retire, and I will recount how this has been accomplished.

Lucy. Would there not be danger in her sudden waking to his presence? So fragile. The shock might be too great for her.

Ashley. I do not think so. From the first her thoughts were his, and it has been her comfort still to speak of him. When she awakes, and sees and hears him pleading as of old, it will be like a dream that gently breaks it to her; — thus joy will take the place of sorrow ere she be fully conscious. Come, then.

Lucy. I hope it may be so. [*Exeunt* ASHLEY *and* LUCY.

Wardour. Sleep like a blessing sits on Sorrow's brow, and is affliction's gentle stage whence sweet refreshment comes. So day by day poor suffering nature renews its strength to climb the barriers to a better health; or step by step with gradual and unperceived retreat glides downwards to forgetfulness. Oh, sleep be thine to strengthen and renew; to gild the dreamy chambers of her mind; to wake her into life; to whisper love, that from the fountain of such joy she drinks refreshing draughts, and the new dawn of her awakening fits her for life again.

Jessie. Wardour!

Wardour. She sleeps, and yet she calls me. I am here. At thy feet I kneel to wait thy gracious favour.

Jessie. You love me? You will be true?

Wardour. Would I might wake thee with my better vows. Oh, envious sleep, that still enwraps her in thy dreams, and shuts the truer light from out her soul,—how I would scare thee with the assurance of my truth!

Jessie. No, no; you love another.

Wardour. Never! Thou,—only thou! What have I done?

Jessie. [*Awaking.*] What was that? I thought I heard a voice in loud and angry tones. Ah! who are you, sir? What do you here?

Wardour. How can I answer where I have deeply wronged — but that I am a suitor at your feet, bankrupt in everything but hope, who craves forgiveness?

Jessie. Mr. Wardour, — here! How came you? But no, — I must not upbraid, — it was my wish to see you once again that I might avouch how freely I forgive.

Wardour. May heaven's blessings comfort you.

Jessie. They are the only blessings left to me. You do well to wish them. What hope is there for one so soon to die?

Wardour. So soon to die? Oh, rather hope!

Jessie. There is no hope this side the grave. Its blossoms once were fragrant with sweet promises, but the winter came ere it was summer, and in a night nipped all.

Wardour. Say rather 'twas a chill which the morrow's sun repaired.

Jessie. What sun hath warmth to give me back the past?

Wardour. That sun which envious clouds ofttimes obscures, which gilds all nature with its beauty, and paints sweet hope with rosy mountain tops; that makes the beggar happy as the king, and perfumes vows with holiness.

Jessie. What sun is that?

Wardour. Love.

Jessie. Love!

Wardour. Oh, hear me! When first I wooed you, and won the virgin promise from your lips, my heart was true, and only knew your love. This tongue alone had erred in early pledge, and barred with cruel fate the vows I made to you. That is no more. She, to whom by wish of friends I was assured, hath with another fled, and I am free — save but in heart and promise given to you, if you will bless me still in holding them.

Jessie. My heart is defenceless by its love, or your first vows had made me now inapt to listen. I may believe you? You do not deceive me?

Wardour. By every sacred hope I swear! this is the truth. I never loved but you. Oh, then, forgive the past. Renew your heart's affections with these words, and make both happy in a mutual love.

Jessie. Once I loved you. Woman's love is once for all. So take the remnant of my days, if this emaciate form be worth regard.

Wardour. Thus would I seal these vows [*kisses her*], and here, sweet lady, by your side assert the care and watchfulness of love. Forgive me. But I could sit and gaze upon that face until my looking were idolatry. So doth my heart — as one that hath been barred from food — feed on your promises and live.

Jessie. This love is life to me, for I had lived but for your love; having not that I had not wherewith to live, but with it comes, in every pulse, a future giving fresh lease of life.

Wardour. So live to love. So let me love and guard you. [*Kisses her.*

Enter LORD DEERSLEY, MR. *and* MRS. STAPLETON *and* DOCTOR.

Mr. S. Theer. Do it agen, lad. Aw'se warrant it 'll do her good. Doctor, that licks physic. Hoo 'll mend after that.

Doctor. Human nature! What a lover I should make. [*Aside.*

Deersley. My dear young lady, I congratulate you upon the turn affairs have taken. Here we have been debating how best to break this news to you; and just as we had arranged, we find Tom has stolen a march and made plain sailing of it. I hope he has apologized for his previous bad behaviour.

Jessie. Thank you, my Lord. Affection asks little in the way of apology. The hand is ever with the heart.

Deersley. Well, well. He is better off than he deserves. The way to atone for the past is to work out an honest future. This I hope he will do.

Mrs. S. The fault, my Lord, has not been wholly his. Hearts will not be ruled even by necessities, and interest makes a poor apologist for love.

Mr. S. Howd yore prachin'. Ha' no' they booath bin plagued enoof without that? Aw'se warrant he 'll be a reet un for her; an' if hoo says ought to thee, lad, about bygones, stop her mouth — thae knows how.

Wardour. Sir, I thank you, and Mrs. Stapleton also, for these kind expressions of your good will. When your daughter is sufficiently restored, which must be our first consideration, I shall be ready to enter into covenant with the future. Meanwhile I desire also to thank my uncle who has so kindly pleaded for me.

Mr. S. Weel spok'n, lad. We'll have a weddin' choose how.

Doctor. More than one, or I mistake. "For 'tis their nature to" —

Enter ASHLEY *and* LUCY, *who kneel at* LORD DEERSLEY'S *feet.*

Deersley. Charles! What is the meaning of this?

Ashley. Pardon me, sir, if I trespass on your kindness.

Deersley. You do, indeed. You are aware that it has ever been my desire that you should form an alliance with one equal in station with yourself. Our blood has never yet been disgraced by a misalliance. I need not tell you how painful this is to me, and that I feel the disappointment bitterly.

Ashley. [*Rising.*] I am truly sorry, my Lord, to grieve you. I do not do it wittingly, but in this matter I am a man — free to choose. My future and not my kindred's is at stake. I sought a heart and found one. I did not look for coronets, for I had one to give. This lady is in all, but birth, my peer, and I look upon it as the proudest setting of our title that she honors my name by accepting it.

Deersley. Charles. It is your own election. I can only trust it may be a happy one — painful though it be to me.

Mrs. S. My Lord. The daughter of Amelia Manville may — at least on her mother's side — seek an alliance with the noblest. If her father be in trade, he is a noble amongst merchants, for he has never stained his name by a dishonorable act, and can match with pride your coronet in wealth. Think not that this has been our seeking. Our daughter has been sought by your son.

Deersley. Amelia Manville — you!

Mrs. S. The sister of Florence Countess of Deersley.

Deersley. This is indeed a surprise. It is not the less

welcome, and I hail with pleasure the recovery of one who was very dear to the memory of my wife. I have long had a suspicion that we had met before, but which proceeded, as I now perceive, from the likeness to your sister. Forgive me then, for her sake, if I have offended you by any unpleasant comparisons. The declaration of your birth removes all prejudices; and, if Miss Lucy will allow me, I shall have great pleasure in joining her hand to Charles's.

Mr. S. Stop, my Lord. Aw ax no favors of onny mon. If theer's a bit o' proid i' Lancashire stiffer nor another, it's here. An' though aw be but a rough sample among men, aw'm straight an' fearless. What, if my daughters ha'n better blood i' their veins than moin,—an' aw larn this now for th' first toim,—yet it munnot be for that but for their own merits they're wedded. It mun be too wi' my consent. Aw've noan forfeited that reet yet.

Deersley. I apologize to you, Mr. Stapleton, as I have already done to your wife. It is the pride of caste, which I ask you to forgive. Be gracious, then, and overlook my mistake; if not for my own, for the sake of these.

Mr. S. A fawt acknowledged is a'most a virtue. Aw shall let th' lasses spake for theirsels.

Jessie. Dear papa. In my case there is no need to say anything. You have previously consented.

Lucy. And I have already said "Yes!" As the court is constituted I shall not amend my plea. To Charles I give my hand, and thank him, for my sister's sake, for the happy suggestion he made to the gentleman who has married his cousin Sophia. This be his reward.

Ashley. I merely gave the hint that the course was clear if he would only act promptly.

Wardour. Charles, I thank you.

Doctor. Oh, that I were young again! What a bridegroom I should make. [*Aside.*

Deersley. What says Mrs. Stapleton? Does she consent?

Mrs. S. Most gladly. To see my children settled in the home of my fathers is a gratification unspeakable. It has been the desire of my life. To my husband's industry and kindness do we owe it that it has been brought about, and I thank him.

Mr. S. Aye. There's sum good i' brass after o'.

Deersley. He has worthily earned and supported by his acts his claim to be a cotton lord; and now that we know each other better, I trust that we may ever respect each other the more.

Mr. S. Aw've larned monny lessons sin aw cum here. One — that even titles ma' be honored by their owners, an' that aw judged foolishly o' thoose born in a station above my own. It wur my ignorance. Another — that money, though it has its good, is but second to worth. An' lastly — that aw'm noan fitted to these country ways, an' if th' woif will, aw'll gie up Normanville to th' young folk, an' goo back to Lancashire a wiser an' a happier mon.

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